CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

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The ability to read English with fluency and to comprehend it, is a fundamental skill for the citizens of our society. This ability to read is considered to be the basis of education. Hundreds and thousands of pupils learn to read in our schools every year. We have to think of the number of pupils who fail to acquire this skill and their low level of skill achieved in the field.

Reading influences individuals as well as the society in many ways. In the modern age reading plays an important part in one's life. It is through reading that one gets the news of current events of political, economical or social values. One's thinking, reasoning and curiosity is aroused by reading. Reading is essential for professionals and non-professionals to keep themselves up-to-date with the new developments. In a democratic country like ours reading has high values for the individuals concerned. Reading has an important role in the communication process of this era. The individuals learn the social adjustments, family and personal adjustments through reading. Oral reading has been given proper importance in the process of reading and oral reading has its own importance in everyday life and greater importance is found in lower classes of schools especially in the subject of English of standard VIII.
Specialists in teaching English as a second language are of the opinion that the process of learning another language involves not only learning the forms of language, its significant sounds and its words, but also the sequences in which the sounds of those words occur. Here the culture of the learner is important because English is the second language for them. In India pupils learn English as a second language which is useful to them when they move out of their state and particularly when they move out of the country if a need arises. They may be able to understand the common English words used in our day-to-day communication. But as it is observed, there is no proper programme or methods to teach the reading of this second language in our schools. The pedagogical fact is that the languages are learned, and not taught. However, if we have to obtain a good reading from the pupils, a proper method is needed to make them learn the art of oral reading. Reading, writing and pronunciation should be presented and practised very carefully both in isolated words and in connected form.

Teaching reading is an important function of the schools. The total range of the pupil's learning depends on his reading skills. If this factor is neglected in the system of teaching process, it directly reflects in the learning of the pupils. Keeping this view in mind, the investigator visited different schools to study the position
of oral reading in English. Oral reading has been given due importance in some schools as the individuals are involved in the reading process and the oral reading in English for standard VIII is a highly individualised process. After a good deal of discussion with the teachers concerned, it was found that importance was given to oral reading because oral reading and spoken languages were closely related for the beginners in English. The investigator tried to study in detail the position of oral reading in English for std. VIII of a few secondary schools of Gujarat. It was found that the teachers read the lessons aloud to the students, explained the meaning and afterwards practice in oral reading was given to the pupils. As they were in the early stages of English learning, reading aloud was considered necessary in the classroom. It was also thought fit to know whether the oral reading ability was measured or not. In most of the cases, oral reading was taken for granted on the fallacious assumption that what was being taught was being learnt by the child. In the schools where oral reading tests were taken, it was observed that there was no proper tool for the same. The schools, where oral reading tests were taken, observed the following procedure.

The student was asked to stand up in the class and to read a paragraph from their text book aloud. The teachers used to listen to the reading and rate the student. In this type of testing, the different errors committed were not
separately taken into account in a systematic way. The absence of a standardized tool proved such a process of testing by the teacher a highly subjective one. Moreover, reading a paragraph only from the text book was not sufficient for the purpose of testing. Is there a tool to distinguish good readers from the poor ones and to help the latter to improve their reading English? If not, how serious is this problem? What are the merits of the present evaluation system in diagnosing these poor readers, if at all there are some tools? How can we decide in which component of oral reading the pupils need help? Answers to all these questions give us an insight into the adequacy or otherwise of the instruments for the precise assessment of students' knowledge and skills in reading. The existing systems are inadequate for the purpose.

There are no proper tests available to the teachers to measure the oral reading systematically. Teachers found it difficult to identify the students who were good readers and who were lagging behind in oral reading.

1.1 Importance of Oral Reading

Oral reading and spoken language are related to each other. Both are expressive, and there is much in common in learning to speak well and to read well orally. Reading aloud well has a vital role in our complex society. Oral
reading is one of the means of communications through which people get better understanding of their own rights, duties and responsibilities. Oral reading is a verbal process interrelated with thinking and it conveys ideas and information from the writer to the reader and listener. In oral reading vocal interpretation is essential as the reader has to convey the view of the author to the audience. The classroom is the place where the pupils can get practice in oral reading to improve their skill in that art.

The pupils may like to read aloud in the class because they consider it to be an opportunity to display their skill among their friends. The topic given for oral reading should be interesting to all. It has been found that all schools do not give much importance to oral reading in the classroom. However, frequency of use is not the sole factor to determine a skill. Mastering this skill is included in the curriculum. Oral reading is not learnt automatically during the course of silent reading but specific attention has to be paid for that.

When oral reading practice is given in the class it is also necessary to evaluate it for the following purposes:

1. To find out the mistakes so that teachers may instruct them accordingly.
2. To compare reading standards of his pupils with those of state norms - to know whether the group's score in line with state norms or not. It enables the teacher to know whether the reading standards of his pupils change slowly.

3. To compare reading standards of the pupils within a class.

4. To assess the progress in reading.

5. To assess the effectiveness of various approaches to the teaching of reading and also to judge the effectiveness of the existing practices.

6. To appraise the individual child's abilities and capabilities because teachers are more concerned with the reading progress of the pupils rather than the overall progress made by the class as a whole.

It is, therefore, not possible to check the effectiveness of the oral reading practice given to the pupils without evaluation. Evaluation is a part and parcel of teaching and evaluation in reading is concerned with both the pupils and the teacher. All children show interest in evaluating their own performance. The teacher has also to find out how reading affects the total development of the pupil.
The aspects of reading are difficult to assess. The teacher who undertakes to evaluate children's growth in oral reading skill will look for such familiar signs as under:

1. The pupil recognizes common words at sight.
2. He pronounces the words correctly.
3. He comprehends what he reads.
4. He uses variety and appropriateness of tone, pitch, force and speed.
5. He enunciates clearly.
6. He appears at ease while he reads.
7. He is free from interfering mannerisms.
8. He is responsive to the reactions of the audience.
9. He exhibits interest and enthusiasm when he reads.
10. He gives his own interpretation, of the selection through oral reading.
11. His posture is correct and dignified without being overframed.

At the juncture it would be worthwhile to quote some examples of the values of oral reading in school and everyday life which are given by 'Hyatt' as quoted by Dehoer & Dallmann.

**Value of Oral Reading**

1. Reading orally to present information toward the solution of a problem.
   a. Reading notes from newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets about some subject of interest when this particular topic is being discussed.
   b. Reading the area figures of certain states to people when the relative size of these states is desired.

2. Reading aloud to inform audience or to provide general knowledge.
   a. Reading an informational news item or magazine article to others.
   b. Reading a speech on some topic to a group.
   c. Reading current events to others.

3. Reading aloud to clarify meanings.
   a. Reading material from a pamphlet, newspaper, magazine, or book to contribute information about the importance of some product in the world today.
   b. Pooling information on a particular subject from a variety of sources.
   c. Reading to contribute information needed in the production of a play.
4. Reading **orally** to share material with another for entertainment, recreation and appreciation.
   a. Reading a popular play to others.
   b. Reading a play to others.
   c. Reading a beautiful poem for others to appreciate and enjoy.

5. Reading aloud to recall past action of private interest to a group.
   a. Reading the minutes of a club meeting to the members of that club.
   b. Reading a statement concerned with the financial status of an organisation to the members of that organization.
   c. Reading an old newspaper account of past activities of a group to the members of that group.

6. Reading orally to prove or disprove a statement.
   a. Reading passages to others to support the position taken in a discussion.
   b. Reading passages to others to substantiate a statement previously made to them.
   c. Reading passages aloud to disprove an assertion made by another of the group.
7. Reading aloud to others for the purpose of providing instructions, directions, announcements, invitations and the like.
   a. Reading to others instructions which supply information concerning work to be done.
   b. Reading to others directions for making something.
   c. Reading to a group announcements of future meetings of the group.

8. Reading orally to others a part in preparation for or in participation in a play, a dramatic dialogue, a radio programme, a talkies, a shadowgraph etc.
   a. Reading to an audience a part in a puppet play.
   b. Reading to an audience a poem as others engage in pantominae.
   c. Reading to a group a part in a dramatic dialogue.

9. Combining reading orally and speaking from notes.
   a. Combining reading and speaking from notes in providing information about the stage setting for a play.
   b. Making a report in which parts are spoken and parts are read.
c. Sketching the closing situation of the plot of a story, telling portions of the story, and reading interesting or exciting parts.

10. Reading aloud to get criticism for the purpose of improving one's oral reading.
   a. Reading aloud a story or poem to get criticism in order to be able to read it very well before a group of people.
   b. Reading a part in a play to get criticism in order to act the part in the final production.
   c. Reading selections to get criticism so that enough improvement will result that the person will be asked to read oftener to the group.

11. Reading aloud for personal pleasure.
   a. Reading aloud a selection to enjoy sudden changes or sharp contrasts.
   b. Reading aloud a poem to make vocal adjustment to rhythm of poetry.
   c. Reading aloud to develop confidence in one's ability to entertain an audience.

12. Reading aloud to provide a good standard of oral reading for others.
a. Reading a poem aloud to give a complete picture.
b. Reading a poem aloud to give the correct interpretation.
c. Reading a poem aloud to create a liking for poetry and to offer stimulation for the reading of more poetry.

13. Reading in the religious institutions.
   a. Reading of Bible or such books in the churches, singing hymns etc.

14. Reading a matter to illiterate people much useful in the country where illiteracy is more.

15. Oral reading can help pupils to.
   a. Communicate ideas.
   b. Provide enjoyment for others.
   c. Add to the reader's understanding of what he reads.
   d. Diagnose problems in silent reading.
   e. Increase vocabulary.
   f. Improve speech.

Thus oral reading is a form of self-expression and it gives a certain degree of personal satisfaction. But again, since comprehension is the central part of oral reading, expression comes only next to comprehension. There are cases where pupils could read orally well with good
speed and skill but still lack in comprehending the matter. Generally speaking, those who read well comprehend well.

For teaching oral reading, the child has to be prepared for the purpose. Even in the case of adults, preparation is essential for oral reading. The material used to read orally should not be above the reading level of the class. Looking to the above mentioned importance of oral reading and need of oral reading measurement the investigator thought fit to construct or standardise a tool for oral reading.

1.2 Presentation of the Problem

The aim of the investigation was to study in detail,
1. the common errors made by the students while reading and
2. their comprehension while reading the given passage aloud. Keeping these two factors in view, a test was to be constructed in English for the pupils of Gujarat. The topic selected was "The Construction and Standardization of Oral Reading Comprehension Test in English for the Pupils of Class VIII of Gujarat".

1.3 Terms defined

It is necessary to clarify the meaning of terms used in the present work. The main terms in the problem are as under:
1. Construction
2. Standardization
3. Oral reading
4. Comprehension test
5. Class VIII pupils
6. Gujarat

**Construction**

Here construction means preparation and selection of the paragraphs for oral reading and questions for measuring comprehension. All the questions were dependent on these paragraphs.

**Standardization**

The statistical term 'standardization' is a process in which the test which has been tried out after construction, the purpose is to was administered on a large population and hence establish the norms, to calculate reliability, and to determine the validity.

**Oral reading**

It is the act of reading aloud with proper pronunciation of words; at the same time grasping the meaning of the written expression.
Comprehension test

'Comprehension test' means a test which can measure the understanding of what is read through the questions below the paragraph.

Class VIII pupils

It means that those pupils studying in standard VIII of secondary schools of Gujarat having Gujarati as their mother tongue and English as a second language. Thus the population includes boys and girls as well.

Gujarat

It includes three well-known regions namely South, Central and North. It does not include Saurashtra and Kutch.

1.4 Objectives

The following objectives were kept in view for the present work.

1. To measure the oral reading comprehension and the oral reading errors of the VIII grade pupils of Gujarat.

2. To prepare different reading passages appropriate for the VIII grade pupils for oral reading purpose, and to append to each paragraph multiple choice questions pertaining to that reading material.
3. To select reading passages with attendant questions after item analysis.

4. To rearrange the paragraphs according to readability values and questions there of upon the difficulty and discriminating values.

5. To establish various norms, calculate reliability, and determine validity.

6. To undertake various concomitant studies pertaining to oral reading.

1.5 Need and Scope

The need for such a study was felt because of the significance of oral reading in the schools. There is no tool for oral reading comprehension and error measurement in India, and very little, as compared to that in U.S.A., research work on scientific basis that appears to have been evolved as yet for oral reading in Indian contexts.

In most of the schools the existing system of assessing oral reading in English is unscientific and inadequate. It has, therefore, become difficult for the teachers to differentiate between good readers from poor readers. This state of affairs prompted the present investigator to undertake this work with the hope that it would help the younger generation to have a definite knowledge as to where
they stand in the oral reading achievement. This knowledge is also supposed to contribute much to one's future adjustment to learning the subject, and to the assessment aspect of oral reading in English.

Eventhough marks are allotted for oral reading in primary and middle stages of schools in Gujarat, there is further scope for improvement by adopting a systematic approach in reading. The test in oral reading will definitely help to adopt a more systematic and practical approach in reading. Thus there is a vast scope for the present test in the field of reading in Gujarat.

There are many psychological correlates, which are being affected or which affect the oral reading, can be unearthed by using the oral reading test. Thus the tool which has been planned to standardize would be used to measure the dependent or independent variable in future research studies.

1.6 Limitations

This oral reading test is standardized for standard VIII pupils of Gujarat. These are students studying through Gujarati medium from pre-primary onwards. They have either adopted English as a subject from standard V in certain schools or from standard VIII in most of the schools. This test is constructed for both the groups. But this test can be administered to standard VIII pupils either at the end of
the academic year or at the beginning of the academic year in standard IX. It can also be given to the repeaters in standard VIII. If the test is administered to standard IX pupils at the beginning of the academic year, repeaters in standard IX should be exempted.

This test is prepared keeping in view that it should be used only in Gujarat because it is parallel with the government policy of teaching English in the state and the general standards of the prescribed text book of standard VIII and its vocabulary and readability of the various units. So it is not advisable to use it in other states.

This test should not be tried in English medium schools as it is not suitable to their requirements.

Further work is not explained in this test. If a pupil is facing reading disability, further work to improve his skill is not explained. That has to be framed by the teacher himself or someone else in the field.

1.7 Scheme of chapterization

The first chapter is devoted to the discussion of the importance of the problem and the study. Besides this presentation of the problem, terms defined, and objectives have also been described. It also includes need, scope and limitations as well.
The second chapter deals with the conceptual aspect of oral reading in which the definitions, nature, forms, types of reading, reading comprehension, and silent reading have been described. It also describes development in reading, oral reading, and oral reading errors.

The third chapter covers the review of the past work done on oral reading. Only pertinent works which shed the light on the present problem of investigation are included in this chapter.

The fourth chapter describes the procedure of work and tool construction. The readability of the text book, selection of the paragraphs and preparation of the questions for comprehension have been described at length.

The fifth chapter explains the pilot administration of the test. The following aspects have been discussed in detail: Sample, administration of the pilot form, precaution, item analysis, item difficulty, item discrimination, item selection and rearrangement of the items for the final form.

The sixth chapter presents the final administration of the test. Here, justification of the sample is given at length. Establishment of different types of norms are also described.

Chapter seven deals with the reliability of the test. Computation of reliability by test-retest method, split-half
method and Kuder-Richardson method have been covered in this chapter.

The eighth chapter deals with the validity of the test. This includes content validity, concurrent validity, predictive validity, intercorrelations of the eight paragraphs, point biserial 'r' and internal consistency.

Chapter nine deals with the correlational study of the test. This is with a view to show that there is a great potentiality of its application. The investigator was interested to know how the test could be used for further studies. Thus three such studies have been included in this chapter as under:

1. Correlational studies of the sex groups and area groups
2. Regression and prediction and
3. Relation between age level and comprehension.

The tenth and the last chapter discusses observations and suggestions. This includes, general observations, specific observation, value and utility of the test. Suggestions have also been given for further research.
The body of the report contains a number of tables and graphs wherever necessary. A list of exhaustive bibliography is given at the end of the report. Besides this appendices consisting of pilot form of the test and final form of the test are also attached at the end.